

MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

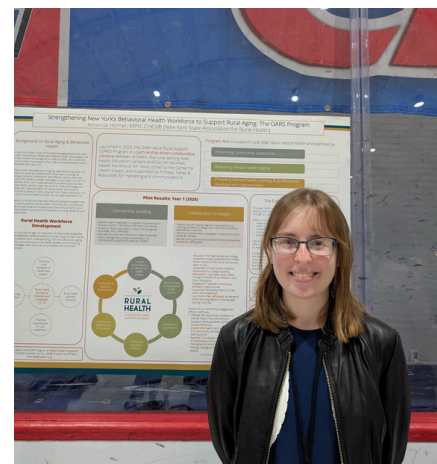
Public Health Partnership Conference Recap

The New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH) partnered with the New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA), New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), and New York State Public Health Corps (NYSPHC) to host the 76th Annual Public Health Partnership Conference in Lake Placid. With more than 500 attendees and 60+ exhibitors, the conference created strong opportunities for collaboration across the public health system.



NYSARH had a strong presence throughout the event. Our team hosted an exhibitor table at the Olympic Center, where board members and volunteers connected with attendees, shared our priorities, the value proposition of being a NYSARH member, and engaged new partners. We also sponsored an evening networking event, providing a more informal space for meaningful conversation and connection.

Our members were well represented in the conference program. Amanda Horner, MPH, CHES®, and Joshua Grove, PhD Candidate, led a session on rural behavioral health, highlighting new publications building on the results of the Statewide Aggregate Rural Health Needs Assessment (SARHNA), including the white paper *The Rural Access Crisis: Bridging the Detection-Management Gap in New York State*, an implementation guide on evidence-based best practices in rural behavioral health, and updates to NYSARH's Diversity Dashboard. Their session also featured a panel of rural Directors of Community Services who shared real-world strategies for advancing behavioral health in rural communities. Amanda additionally presented a poster on rural workforce development through NYSARH's Older Adult Rural Support (OARS) Program.



NYSARH's Board member Shari Weiss co-led a session with Renae Rokicki from Upstate Medical University on "Generations in the Workplace and their Impact on Organizational Culture," focusing on practical strategies to strengthen the workforce culture across five generations. NYSARH member Cam Cardinale of Lower Adirondack Pride led a session on "LGBTQIA+ Health in Practice" in rural areas. This session highlighted approaches to social programming, case management, advocacy, and mental health best practices to support equity in rural communities.

The final evening of the conference concluded with an informal networking gathering at Smoke Signals, giving attendees an opportunity to continue conversations and connect with colleagues while taking in the beauty of Lake Placid.

Registration is Now Open: 2026 NYSARH Rural Health Symposium

We are excited to announce that registration is now open for the 2026 NYSARH Annual Rural Health Symposium, taking place **September 17-18 at the beautiful Thousand Island Harbor Hotel in Clayton, NY**. This premier event brings together healthcare professionals, public health experts, students, and key stakeholders to explore the latest innovations and challenges in rural health.

Speaker



Karen Madden

Director, Center for Health Care Policy and Resource Development

[Register Now!](#)

Call for Proposals:

We are seeking breakout session abstracts and poster submissions from both professionals and students for presentation at the Symposium. Join us in sharing practical strategies, research, and innovative ideas that advanced rural health across New York State.

Keynote Speaker



Diane M. Hall, PhD, MEd

Director, Office of Rural Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Submit a Poster](#)

[Submit an Abstract](#)

Don't miss this chance to connect, learn, and contribute to the future of rural health in New York State!

May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

Help us promote Mental Health Awareness Month in rural New York! Your support can make a real difference in reducing stigma and increasing access to resources. Here's how you can get involved:

- **Share our Rural Mental Health Factsheets:** Developed with Rural Minds, these flyers highlight unique mental health challenges in rural communities.
- **Use our Advocacy Toolkit:** Access the Mental Health & Older Americans Month Advocacy Toolkit from the OARS Program for resources to support older adults' mental wellbeing.
- **Spread the word:** Post on your social media channels using our toolkit to raise awareness and encourage conversations about mental health.

[Access Full Toolkit](#)

OLDER ADULT MENTAL HEALTH IN RURAL NEW YORK

Mental Health Awareness Month + Older Americans Month

Every May, we have an opportunity to talk about aging and mental health in a way that is honest, hopeful, and grounded in community. The 2026 Older Americans Month theme, *Champion Your Health*, reminds us that healthy aging includes mental and emotional well-being, not just physical health. In rural communities, that means recognizing the strengths older adults already bring to their families and communities, while also making it easier to stay connected, ask for support, and access care without stigma.

Mental health matters at every age.

Older adults are not defined by decline. They bring resilience, perspective, caregiving, volunteerism, and community leadership to rural life. At the same time, life transitions such as retirement, grief, caregiving stress, chronic illness, and reduced mobility can affect mental health. Supporting mental and emotional well-being helps protect independence, social connection, and quality of life.

KEY POINTS

- Healthy aging includes emotional, social, and mental well-being.
- Mental health concerns in older adults are real, but they are not an inevitable part of aging.
- Talking openly about mental health can help people seek support earlier.

RURAL HEALTH | Mother Cabrini



JOIN NYSARH MEMBERSHIP!

20% OFF

APRIL 15TH-MAY 31ST



MEMBER BENEFITS

- State and federal Policy Resources, including legislative trainings, policy briefs, monthly meetings, advocacy toolkits, and more.
- Networking opportunities.
- Discounts on NYSARH conference and partner events like the NYSARH Fall Rural Health Symposium and Public Health Partnership conferences.
- CHES credits discounts for Rural educational webinars.
- RaP Fellowship Opportunities.

JOIN TODAY!



USE CODE
SPRING2026

nysarh.org

NYSARH's Membership Drive ends May 31st

We are offering a **20% discount on all new memberships.**

Why NYSARH membership matters:

"NYSARH plays a unique role in bringing together the many partners we work with across our rural communities. While each organization operates within its own space, NYSARH serves as the bridge connecting public health, health systems, rural health networks, and community-based organizations to better understand shared challenges and opportunities."

*-Paul Pettit, Public Health Director
Genesee & Orleans County Health
Departments & NYSARH Policy Chair*

[Join Today!](#)

NYSARH Member of the Year

NYSARH is proud to congratulate **Sara Deukmejian**, Rural Health Network Manager at Adirondack Health Institute (AHI), on being awarded the NYSARH Member of the Year Award at the 2026 Public Health Partnership Conference!

Sara's dedication to strengthening rural health partnerships and advancing health outcomes across the North Country exemplifies the spirit of our organization.



Contraception Myths: What Patients Hear – and What Providers Should Know



Hosted By:



CHES Credits Offered By:



Speaker:

Stacy Sun, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry

CHES, Social Work, OT, PT, and LMHC, Credits Offered

[Register Now!](#)

Join this webinar to learn the facts about major contraceptive methods, including emergency, long-acting, barrier, and hormonal options. We'll address common myths around fertility, cancer risk, weight, bone health, and more, plus share strategies for responding to patient and public concerns.

Executive Director's Corner by Jennifer Muthig

The last month has been full and productive, marked by strong advocacy, meaningful collaboration, and continued progress on key priorities for our rural communities. Over the past several weeks, I have been actively engaged in educating lawmakers and their staff to advance our priority bills. These conversations are critical to ensuring that the needs of our communities and the realities of rural systems are clearly understood at the state level. We are seeing growing awareness and engagement from policymakers, and we will continue to push forward with a focused and strategic approach.

I also had the opportunity to attend and help lead the Public Health Partnership Conference in collaboration with our partners at the New York State Public Health Association, the New York State Association for County Health Officials, and the Department of Health. This event reinforced the strength of our statewide partnerships and the importance of aligning efforts across sectors to address complex public health challenges.

I want to take a moment to recognize and express how proud I am of our team, particularly Amanda Horner and researcher Joshua Grove, for their outstanding panel presentation. Their work highlighted innovative approaches to integrated behavioral health care, specifically addressing anxiety and depression, and demonstrated how data can drive better outcomes. Their presentation showed both the depth of our work and our commitment to advancing equitable, data-informed care.

This month is a strong reflection of what we can accomplish through collaboration, leadership, and a shared commitment to improving health systems. Thank you to our partners, members, and stakeholders who continue to move this work forward.